

DILIP KUMAR WASN'T JUST AN ACTOR BUT AN INSTITUTION, SAYS SENATOR NEPHEW IN PAK
pg 08

BELIEF IN TOUCH AS SALVATION WAS STRONGER THAN FEAR OF CONTAGION IN THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE
pg 04

DOCUMENTARY 'STATELESS' PREMIERES IN US
pg 08



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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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CM's greetings on Drukpa Tshe-zi

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 JUL: Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang has extended his warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Sikkim on the auspicious occasion of Drukpa Tshe-zi.

Drukpa Tshe-zi is one of the most auspicious and significant occasions for Buddhists all over the world. It marks the day on which Lord Buddha gave his first sermon on the Four Noble Truths to his first five disciples in the Deer Park at Sarnath, after attaining enlightenment more than 2500 years ago.

In his message, the Chief Minister also calls upon the Sikkimese brethren to imbibe and follow the teachings and ideals of Lord Buddha and strive forth on the path of truth, peace, nobility, compassion, and harmony.

He also urged the people to protect and preserve the tranquil environment and communal harmony of the state, which is its hallmark.

India's first COVID patient tests positive again for coronavirus

THRASSUR, JULY 13 (PTI): A woman medico, who was India's first COVID-19 case, has tested positive again for the virus, health authorities said here on Tuesday.

"She is reinfected with COVID-19. Her RT-PCR is positive, antigen is negative. She is asymptomatic," Thrissur DMO Dr K J Reena told PTI.

Her samples were tested as she was prepared to go to New Delhi for study purposes.

Then the RT-PCR result turned out to be positive, she said.

The woman is presently at home and "she is OK," the doctor said.

It was on January 30, 2020 that the third year medical student from Wuhan university tested positive for coronavirus, becoming the country's first COVID-19 patient, days after she had returned home following semester holidays.

After nearly three weeks of treatment at the Thrissur Medical College Hospital, she had tested negative twice for the virus, confirming her recovery, and was discharged on February 20, 2020.

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Pandemic tones down pomp, but sentiments remain strong for the Aadikavi at Gangtok observance

GANGTOK, 13 JUL (IPR): To commemorate the 207th birth anniversary of Nepali poet, Aadikavi Bhanu Bhakta Acharya, a brief function was held at Bhanu Udhyaan, Zero Point in Gangtok today.

The function was attended by Governor Ganga Prasad as chief guest, Chief Minister, Prem Singh Tamang as guest of honour, along with Speaker, SLA, LB Das, Deputy Speaker, SLA, Sangay Lepcha, Cabinet Ministers, MP Lok Sabha, Indra Hang Subba, MLAs, Political Secretary to CM, Confidential Secretary to CM, Heads of Departments, Mayor and Deputy Mayor GMC, members of Nepali Sahitya Parishad, Police personnel and other dignitaries.

The Governor, the Chief Minister and other dignitaries and guests paid homage to the Aadikavi by offering khadas



to his statue at Bhanu Udhyaan.

In view of the current Covid-19 pandemic situation in the State, the oc-

casions of Bhanu Jayanti celebrated annually as an extravagant cultural festival was observed in a simple and brief function.

Relocated Bhanu Salig unveiled at Soreng on Bhanu Jayanti



SORENG, 13 JUL (IPR): To commemorate the 207th Birth Anniversary of Nepali poet and writer Aadikavi Bhanubhakta Acharya, the relocated Bhanu Salig was inaugurated by the guest of honour, Ex-Chief Secretary, P.K. Pradhan along with the chief guest, MLA, Aditya Golay at Soreng Bazaar, today.

The program had the attendance of the

Press Advisor to the CM, C.P. Sharma, Chairperson- Horticulture and Agriculture Board, C K. Rana, Advisor- Sports and Youth, M.N. Subba, S.D.M-Soreng, Ranjan Rai, B.D.Os- Soreng and Chumbung, Smt. Sabina Subba and Kailash Gurung respectively, other Officials along and local gentry.

Speaking to the media, the MLA dedicated

the relocated Bhanu Salig to the people of Soreng. He informed that earlier it was situated at the Community Hall premises and that it needed to be relocated in order to be more visible for the general public. Another reason for shifting the Bhanu Salig is to extend the present Community Hall Complex, he informed. He also added

turn to pg02

Sikkim's test positivity rate remains high at 28%, samples screened a shadow of what is possible

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 13 JUL:

The second wave of Covid has subsided in the more populous parts of the country but appears hesitant to exit Sikkim just yet. As per the Daily Report of Covid-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme of the Health Department this morning, the 796 tests carried out on Monday returned 226 samples positive for Covid-19, giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 28.3%.

While the number of tests being conducted on a daily basis is noticeably lower, no clear explanation has been offered yet on why this is so, especially since a lot of cases are coming up in clusters, the numbers spread out over several days.

Lockdown relaxations were always expected to lead to spike, but one way to keep the R-Factor [number of people infected by each

positive person] low is to test extensively in areas emerging as clusters. This happened for a while during the peak of the second wave, but appears to have slackened of late.

Sikkim's R-Factor, as per officials quoted in national media reports is 0.88. What this means is that every set of 100 Covid positive cases leads to, on average, 88 more infections. Only wider testing can bring this number down by expediting screening of primary contacts.

To get a gist of how necessary this is. The Health Bulletin posted by the Health Department on its Facebook page on Monday night informs that a family of three tested positive at Lingdok on Sunday. In all probability, they had given their samples either on Friday or Saturday for screening.

Upon learning that they had tested positive, the family did the responsible thing and in-

formed health workers that three days earlier, they had held the casting [dhalai] of a floor of their under-construction building at Lingdok. This was too close to their testing positive and now everyone who attended the "dhalai" event is a primary contact.

Not everyone as responsible and forthright as this family in sharing information about their primary contacts and the Health Department's contact tracing team is having difficulty tracing people who have tested positive.

In a recent anecdote shared in the Health Bulletin, the State IEC Officer informed that a person got tested in Gangtok and gave a contact address here and after spending an entire day trying to reach him, the contact tracing team was informed that he was in fact a resident of South Sikkim and had returned home. Even after contact was established over

phone, the teams could not reach him because his location in South Sikkim remains unclear.

Meanwhile, Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 detect in the State has reached 22,623.

Of the 226 new cases, 144 were registered in East District, 40 in West District, 41 in South District and one in North District.

There are currently 2,281 active cases of novel coronavirus in the State, of whom only 94 are nursing symptoms severe enough to require hospitalization. Of those in hospital, 12 are in the ICU. 16 patients were admitted in hospital today itself.

The only positive aspect of the Covid stats today is that there were no new Covid deaths in Sikkim.

In the meantime, 170 more formerly Covid-positive people were discharged from home and facility isolation after making full recoveries on Monday.

Human Rights panel orders Probe Into Assam Police Encounters

GUWAHATI, 13 JUL (PTI): The Assam Human Rights Commission (AHRC), taking suo moto cognisance of media reports, has asked the state government to institute an inquiry into the circumstances that led to the death and injury of 12 persons in police encounters over the past two months.

AHRC member Naba Kamal Bora, in an order, noted that news reports have pointed out all the accused were unarmed and in handcuffs during the police firing. He also stated that firing upon an accused when in police custody or during a chase should not be made a trend.

Considering the "gravity of the situation", the commission has directed the state government's principal secretary of the

home and political department to institute an inquiry to find out the facts and circumstances



leading to the death and injuries of the 12 accused, said the order, which was made available to the reporters on Tuesday.

The commission has asked the principal secretary to submit the probe report by August 17.

Earlier, a Delhi-based lawyer from Assam, Arif Jwadder, had filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission

(NHRC) against the Assam Police for the series of encounters that have taken place since Himanta Biswa Sarma took over as chief minister on May 10. He had urged the NHRC to take note of these incidents and call for an inquiry.

Justifying the encounters, Mr Sarma had on July 5 said that shooting at criminals "should be the pattern" if they attempt to escape from custody or try to snatch guns from the police to fire at them.

Opposition parties have, however, decried the recent incidents of firing, with state Congress chief Ripun Bora saying that the Chief Minister's statement has "dangerous ramifications", and that if this practice of encounters is not checked Assam may soon become a "police state".

PM interacts with Indian athletes bound for Tokyo Olympics

Delhi, 13 Jul [PIB]: Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacted with Indian athletes' contingent bound for Tokyo Olympics today through video conference. The interaction by the Prime Minister is an endeavour to motivate the athletes ahead of their participation at the games. Anurag Thakur, Minister for Youth Affairs & Sports; Nisith Pramanik, MoS Youth Affairs and Sports and Kiren Rijiju, Law Minister were also present on the occasion.

In an informal and spontaneous interaction, the Prime Minister motivated the athletes and thanked their families for their sacrifice. Talking to Deepika Kumari (Archery), the Prime Minister congratulated her for the Gold in the World Championship. The Prime Minister mentioned that her journey began with plucking mangoes through archery and enquired about her journey as a sportsperson. The Prime Minister lauded Pravin Jadhav (Archery) for staying on the path despite difficult circumstances. The Prime Minister also interacted with his family and praised their efforts.

Mr Modi interacted with the family in Marathi.

Talking to Neeraj Chopra (Javelin Throw), the Prime Minister inquired about the athlete's experience with the Indian Army and also his recovery from injury. Mr Modi asked the athlete to give his best without getting bogged down by the weight of expectation. With Dutee Chand (Sprint), Mr Modi started with the meaning of her name that is 'brightness' and complimented her for spreading the light through her sporting skills. The Prime Minister asked her to forge ahead fearlessly as the entire India is behind the athletes. The Prime Minister asked Ashish Kumar (Boxing) why he chose Boxing. PM asked how he fought with both COVID-19 and kept with his training. The Prime Minister also praised him for not wavering from his goal despite the loss of his father. The athlete recalled the support network of family and friends in the process of recovery. Modi recalled the occasion when cricketer Sachin Tendulkar lost his father in similar circumstances and how he gave tribute

to his father through his sports.

The Prime Minister lauded Mary Kom (Boxing) for being a role model for many athletes. He also enquired how she was able to take care of her family and continue with her sport especially during the pandemic. The Prime Minister asked about her favourite punch and her favourite player. He wished her the best. With PV Sindhu (Badminton), the Prime Minister enquired about her practice in Gachibowli, Hyderabad. He also asked the importance of diet in her training. The Prime Minister asked her parents for advice and tips they want to give to parents who want to make their children a sportsperson. Wishing the athlete success in the Olympics the Prime Minister said that he too will have ice cream with her when he will welcome the athletes on their return.

The Prime Minister asked Elavenil Valarivan (Shooting) why she got interested in the sport. On a personal note, Mr Modi talked to the shooter who was raised in Ahmedabad, in Gujarati and greeted her parents in Tamil and

recalled her early years as he was MLA from her area Mani Nagar. He enquired how she balances both her studies and sports training.

The Prime Minister talked to Saurabh Chaudhary (Shooting) of the role of yoga in improving concentration and mental poise. The Prime Minister asked the veteran player Sharath Kamal (Table Tennis) about the difference between previous and this Olympics and learnt about the impact of pandemic on the occasion. Mr Modi said that his vast experience will help the entire contingent. With another Table tennis ace Manika Batra (Table Tennis), the Prime Minister was full of praise for her for training the poor children in sport. He remarked about her practice of wearing tricolor in her hand while playing. He asked whether her passion for dancing acts as a stress buster in her sports.

The Prime Minister asked how Vinesh Phogat (Wrestling) copes up with the heightened expectations due to her family legacy. Referring

turn to pg02

Tribal Dev Minister joins Darj in celebrating

Bhanu Jayanti

SMRITA KHAWAS

DARJEELING, 13 JUL:

The 207th birth anniversary of Adi Kabi Bhanubhakta Acharya was observed today at Chowrasta here jointly by the Information and Culture Department, Gorkhaland Territorial Administration, in the presence of the Backward Classes Welfare and Tribal Development Department Minister Bulu Chik Baraik, Chairperson-Siliguri Municipal Corporation Gautam Dev, the former GTA chairperson Anit Thapa, SP, DM and the GTA principal secretary.

This was Mr Baraik's first visit to Darjeeling for Bhanu Jayanti, a miss he explained to the grand Bhanu Jayanti celebrations hosted in the Tarai from where he hails. He thanked the CM for according him the honor of attending the Bhanu Jayanti celebrations in Darjeeling.

The former GTA chairperson in turn thanked the WB Government and the CM for organising the event and making it a state-level event by involving more arms of the government in its organization.

The Bimal Gurung faction also celebrated Bhanu Jayanti at its party office in Singmari after which Bimal Gurung was at Chowrasta to pay homage to the Adi Kabi's statue here.

GPCS Rumtek celebrates

Bhanu Jayanti

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 13 JUL:

Government Pharmacy College Sajong (GPCS) Rumtek celebrated the 207th Bhanu Jayanti at its college campus today, a press release informs.

GPCS organized the celebration on the theme of "Each One Reach One" and distributed Covid-19 relief package of essential materials among the villagers of Bankathang village, Sajong GPU, Ranka block under "Unnat Bharat Abhiyan", AICTE, New Delhi.

The relief package was handed over by members of "National Service scheme (NSS) Unit" in the presence of Principal/Director, DrGauthaman Karunakaran, faculty members, and students of GPCS.

The event was co-ordinated by Assistant Professor, Kiran Sharma, GPCS NSS Coordinator and Assistant Professor GPCS, Anish Pradhan, Swachhta Action Plan coordinator.

PM interacts with...

to her challenges, the Prime Minister asked how she dealt with them. He also talked to her father and asked about the ways of grooming such illustrious daughters. He enquired from Sajon Prakash (Swimming) about his grave injury and how he overcame it.

Talking to Manpreet Singh (Hockey), the PM said that interacting with him reminds him of hockey legends like Major Dhyan Chand, etc. and expressed the hope that his team will keep the legacy alive.

With Saina Mirza (Tennis), the Prime Minister remarked about the increasing popularity of Tennis sport and asked the senior player for her advice to the new aspirants. He also enquired about her equation with her partner in Tennis. He asked about the change she witnessed in sports during the last 5-6 years. Sania Mirza said that India is witnessing a self-belief in recent years and that will reflect in the performance.

Two-child policy in India

KALYAN BARUA

While UP and Assam are framing new guidelines in this direction, there are several other states in India, which have this rule for specific things like contesting in local body elections etc. In Rajasthan, if a person has more than two children, they are disqualified from contesting the local elections. A similar provision barring people with more than two children from contesting local elections exist in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

In tracing the recent history of theory and research on the correlation between demography and economics, we find a new consensus is emerging; that reductions in fertility and declining ratios of dependent to working age populations provide a window of opportunity for economic development and poverty reduction.

Empirical studies increasingly support the idea that countries which have incorporated population policies and family planning programmes in their overall economic development strategies have achieved high and sustained rates of economic growth and that they have also managed significant reductions in poverty. Fertility reduction is by no means an economic development panacea and is certainly not a sufficient condition for economic growth, but it may well be a necessary condition, establishing conditions in which governments can invest more per capita in education and health, thus creating the human capital for sustained economic growth. Likewise, with fewer children to care for and raise, families can improve their prospects for escaping the poverty trap. At both the macro- and micro-levels, moderating fertility enhances economic prospects.

Expert researchers on demographic-economic research made an impact assessment

study and concluded that 'high fertility and rapid population growth have serious adverse social and economic effects'.

Should two-child policy be made compulsory across all Indian states? More importantly, should we adopt a stringent stick (and carrot) rule to implement such a policy? These are a bit of old questions but have suddenly resurfaced in the context of the recent draft population policy launched by one of the Indian states (UP). As expected, the move has made many people elated and excited and some of them are openly advocating for more severe 'sticks' to make a section of population pay the price for overproducing.

It is not new – a bunch of other states are already applying these sticks. The UP stick, however, is apparently more severe. Forget contesting elections, you won't get a government job or even rations (for more than 4 people) or other public subsidies if you produce more than two children. And, there are more.

Who are likely to be affected? Of course, not the urban- middle class -educated folks like many of us. It is almost certain that most of them would be from the poor, marginalized, and powerless families, especially the women from the weaker sections. They are poor because they produce more; they produce more because they are poor. You need a strong and stringent rule to break this vicious cycle and it is urgent, we are told.

One cannot but appreciate the sense of urgency in population control. But, are there enough scientific evidences that these measures worked well where these stick and carrot policy is in vogue? The evidences from China are alarming – the one/two-child restriction played havoc on its social and demographic structure (and, hence, China had to loosen its chain and allow up to three children per couple). Can we see any

'extra' positive changes in the Indian states where this so-called two-child norm has been in place in different degrees?

On the contrary, we now have huge body of evidences that tell you why coercive measures should be avoided even when they yield instant political gain. It is quite evident that, without any stick or carrot, In-

ViewPoint

dia has almost reached the replacement or target level fertility of 2.1 per woman (it is now 2.2). Actually, many of the states have slipped well below this level. How did they do that? How did Bangladesh reduce its Total Fertility level to 1.9 in 2020 from an abysmal figure of 6.7 in 1971 without any coercion?

The first key to this success is women's right. The state/country must ensure girls' education and easy access to the job market (after they complete their formal education). The second key is a well-functioning basic health care system that ensures easy access to contraceptives and maternal plus child health care. In other words, reduce IMR and MMR, and meet the unmet need for contraceptives if you want to reduce fertility. The success in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and some of the Indian states (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, etc.) owes its root in application of either or both of these two keys.

Why do rulers follow stick and carrot? What explains their behavior? We, the public health researchers and professionals spent a great deal of time and effort to 'understand' and 'change' the behavior of powerless. Can we do it for the powerful as well?

[The writers is a Research Scholar at SRM University, Sikkim. kalyanbarua@gmail.com]

Agri Minister announces vegetable production incentives

GANGTOK, 13 JUL (IPR):

The Minister for Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services, Lok Nath Sharma called a press conference on the implementation of Production Incentives Scheme (Financial Incentives) here in the capital today. Speaking to media persons, he elaborated the revised financial incentives of five focused crops and newly introduced financial incentives of vegetables and further, elucidated ongoing planning and preparation of modalities for successful implementation.

It is informed that the state government, has recently accorded approval for financial incentives of identified vegetables that includes Rs. Five per kilogram of Cabbage, Rs. Seven per kilogram of Cauliflower, Rs. Eight per kilogram of Green Pea, Rs. Twenty per kilogram of Dalley Khorsani, Rs. Seven per kilogram of Radish/Carrot and Rs. Twenty-Five per kilogram of Kiwi. Similarly, as per the revised incentives, the farmers will receive Rs. 100 per kilo-



gram of Cardamom, Rs. 20 per kilogram of Ginger, Rs. 10 Per kilogram of Turmeric, Rs. 10 per kilogram of Buckwheat and Rs. 20 per kilogram of Orange.

The Minister clearly emphasised on comprehensive planning and procedure involving various steps in ensuring smooth flow of incentives to all targeted beneficiaries.

Firstly, the farmers need to report the quantity of production at their nearby VLW Centre or identified cooperatives/FPOs/SIMFED/ Denzong Agriculture Cooperative Society/SHG/ departmental field functionaries and that will be followed by field verification by the concerned authority. Thus, the process

of marketing of identified varieties will be executed through organized sector, which will be a practical and authenticated medium to provide the incentives to the farmers. Even the marginalized farmers will be benefited for selling minimum quantity of production, hence, there will be no floor benchmark in terms of quantity and no limitation in numbers of farmers beneficiaries, he added. He also urged FPOs to work proactively and concerned departments, DCs, ADCs, BDOs, Panchayats, field functionaries to be actively involved in successful implementation of the programme.

Further he shared about the mechanism to create massive awareness at every nook and

corner about the newly initiated incentive so that the farming community will certainly gear up for increasing productivity. The state government is putting all endeavours to strengthen the rural economy and shared a data that, every year the people spend around 100 Crore in importing poultry, 68 Crore in Pig-gery and 43 Crore in fish and the said amount can be circulated amongst the farming community of Sikkim by tapping the resources if our farmers get self-reliant in these livestock farming sectors.

Secretary Horticulture, M.T Sherpa informed that in view of controlling undue advantage of Hoarding and Profiteering, there is ceiling in receiving incen-

tives of Rs. Thirty Thousand per crop and Rs. One Lakh against selling of all varieties. The incentives will be provided twice a year. Further he deliberated upon the entire procedure and objectives behind the programme in detail.

Secretary AH&VS, Dr. Sangay D. Bhutia outlined details on financial incentives for Piggery farming. He elaborated framed criteria in details and mentioned that the weight of each pig should be of Fifty Kilogram at minimum to be entitled for the financial incentives of Rs Fifteen Thousand at the rate of Rs. 5000/- per pig. The State Government has already allocated Rupees Three Crore and the amount is adequate to cover at least 1800 beneficiaries in the initial phase, while there is no limitation in number of beneficiaries against fulfilling the criteria. He mentioned that there is three-tier committee at State, District and Block Level involving Panchayats, veterinary officers, field functionaries and all concerned, for the implementation of the programme.

Secretary Horticulture, M.T Sherpa informed that in view of controlling undue advantage of Hoarding and Profiteering, there is ceiling in receiving incen-

have better training camps and better equipment. Today, more international exposure is also being provided to the players. He said that so many changes have happened in such a short time since sports related institutions have given priority to suggestions by the sportspersons. He also expressed happiness that for the first time, such a large number of players have qualified for the Olympics. He said that campaigns like 'Fit India' and 'Khelo India' contributed to this. He said for the first time, players from India are participating in so many sports. There are many sports in which India has qualified for the first time.

The Prime Minister said that seeing the confidence and energy of young India, he is optimistic that the day is not far when only victory will become New India's habit. He advised players to give their best and asked the countrymen to "Cheer4India"

207th Bhanu Jayanti observed in Namchi

NAMCHI, 13 JUL (IPR):

The 207th Birth Anniversary of Nepali poet Aadikavi Bhanu Bhakta Acharya was observed by offering prayers and garlands before the statue of Adhi Kavi at Bhanu Salig in Namchi today.

The program was organised by Dakshin Sikkim Sahitya Sammelan and had the attendance of District Collector (South), M Bharani, SSP (South), Thakur Thapa, Chairperson Namchi Municipal Council, Ganesh Rai alongside Advisor Dakshin Sikkim Sahitya Sammelan,

Thiru Prasad and Advisor Skill Development Board, Satish Chandra Rai accompanied by Officials and local gentry.

This year's Birth Anniversary of the Nepali poet was observed in a low key manner without Shobha Yatra and other cultural program in view of guidelines laid by the State Government owing to Covid-19. Precautionary measures and social distancing norms were duly practiced during today's event.

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Relocated Bhanu...

that he has put forward a proposal to the CM for extension of the existing B.D.O Building under the New District upgradation. Also speaking in the conference, the Press Advisor to the CM, C.P.Sharma said that more acknowledgement has to be given to the scripts and writings of Bhanubhakta Acharya. "Nowadays writing in Nepali has become more difficult and rarer as compared to writing in English", he commented. Likewise, S.D.M-Soreng, Ranjan Rai said that celebration of Bhanu Jayanti means to celebrate Nepali language and culture and that it should be done every day.

The celebration then continued in the Community Hall. It was informed that the Bhanubhakta Salik was first inaugurated in 2002 by the then Ministers Prem Singh Tamang and Thinlay Tshering Bhutia.

Press Advisor to the CM, C.P. Sharma in his address extended his warm greetings to all the individual guests and officials. In his address, he said that the program is being held while maintaining the Covid protocol. He firstly thanked the MLA for initiating and responding to the suggestion of shifting the Salik in the current location. He expressed his sincere gratitude to the Ex-M.P Lok Sabha, Dil Kumari Bhandari for her relentless and persistent efforts to include Nepali Language in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution. He also extended his congratulations to D.K. Bhandari for being nominated for the Bhanu Puraskar 2021. He continued his speech by saying the Nepali language speaking people owe a huge debt to the Aadikavi for he was the one to translate the Hindu text of Ramayan from Sanskrit into Nepali and introduced the language to the world. In conclusion, he encouraged each and every one to write more often in Nepali language.

The program then continued with a short speech given by the Guest of Honour, P.K. Pradhan wherein he firstly thanked and was humbled for being invited as a guest. He said that even though Bhanubhakta Acharya was born in Nepal, his yearly birth anniversary has been celebrated and glorified by all Nepali language speaking people across the globe. The Aadikavi has helped in bringing unity amongst a diversified Nepali community, he added. In between his speech, he praised and appreciated the Government in bringing faster development and growth in the region within a span of two and half years since the inception of the new Government. He also thanked the Government for taking swift and necessary action against the ongoing pandemic in the State while also urging the general public to obey and follow proper Covid protocols. He ended his speech by thanking the Police department for taking strict measurements in regulating public movement.

In continuation of the celebratory day, the audience were lastly addressed by the MLA, Aditya Golay. He extended his warm greeting to all the esteemed guests and the Officials. He said that while following proper Covid protocol, celebratory events such as Bhanu Jayanti cannot be missed. He pointed out the importance of relocating the Bhanu Salik in the heart of the town is to remind any passer-by of Aadikavi's great contribution towards the Nepali community. He also requested the general public to come forward in respecting and safe guarding the public property since it is established for their usage and knowledge. He briefly mentioned about the official progress of the up-coming district formation. Better administrative work can be carried out in the new district, he added. He also informed that a budget of Rupees two Crores have been sanctioned for the restoration and renovation of the old Government buildings. "I urge every individual including the Government Officials and the community along with our leaders to work together in making Soreng a Model District of Sikkim", he concluded.

In between the program, a short self-written poem was recited by Mandira Rawat. The program also featured the felicitation of the CM Chief Guest and the Guest of Honour by the organising committee by presenting the ceremonial shawl and traditional Dhaka topi.

The program ended with a Vote of Thanks by the BDO- Chumbung, Kailash Gurung.

SDM visits monasteries in Boomtar

NAMCHI, 13 JUL (IPR): SDM (HQ), Chiran Rizal along with SDPO (Namchi), Kessang D Bhutia visited Ngadak Gumpa, Upper Ghurpisey Gumpa, Alley Gumpa and Tamang Gumpa, Boomtar today to sensitize the management about the spread of Covid-19 and the necessary precautionary measures to be taken.

The Incharges of the monasteries were instructed to ensure that Covid appropriate behaviour is strictly followed. There were asked to refrain from conducting puja and avoid gathering till further orders.

They were advised to identify dedicated vehicle



and person to be engaged to visit the markets and bringing essential commodities to minimize con-

tact with students staying in the Gumpa. They were also requested to ensure wearing of Masks and

other Covid appropriate behaviour. The SDM HQ also instructed Gumpa Management of Bermiok

Gumpa, Namthing Temi and Nagi Gumpa to follow the covid protocol strictly.

Assam-Mizoram Border Row: Fresh stand-off over forest clearing activity

GUWAHATI, 13 JUL (PTI): After at least three bombs went off in southern Assam's Cachar bordering Mizoram allegedly by Mizo criminals, the state government said on Monday and added the accused threatened the officials with "abusive language and weapons like axe and sickle."

In a press statement, Assam authorities claimed that a suspected IED blast was carried out allegedly by Mizo criminals on Saturday followed by two explosions in the Kulicherra area where tension is high as people from Mizoram have reportedly entered up to 6.5 kilometres inside Assam a few days ago. Following this, the Assam Police along with civil administration carried out an eviction drive.

"On Saturday morning, around 25 metres ahead of the already deployed Kulicherra CRPF camp, Mizo citizens and Mizoram Police barricaded the entry towards Dholakhal in Kulicherra," the press note said.

The statement also said that officials were "met by a mob of Mizoram miscreants who threatened the officials with abusive language and weapons like axe and sickle despite the area being well inside Assam."

The Assam police has now managed to push the mob back across the Kulicherra stream. Mizoram police and civilians have "camped across the stream block-

ing pathway to Upper Phainom School (path leading to Kulicherra), the statement added.

Mizoram Home Minister Lalchamlia said the state will seek compensation from the Assam government for allegedly destroying crops of some Mizo families, a move that Assam government says were part of the "forest protection activity well within Assam's border."

"The incident which took place last week at Buarhep in the border area wherein crops of some Mizo farmers had been destroyed by police forces of Assam is an unfortunate act that needs to be strongly condemned the unfortunate incident. Adequate compensation must be given by the Government of Assam to the affected farmers and Mizoram will follow up this demand," Mr Lalchamlia said in a press statement. He has however said the clashes are motivated by local elected bodies and leaders in the districts and that it is unfortunate.

Three districts of the southern Assam's Barak Valley - Karimganj, Hailakandi and Cachar - share a 123-km long border with three districts of Mizoram - Mamit, Kolasib and Aizawl - of which, the National Highway 306 runs through Lailapur in Cachar to Vairengte in Kolasib through a border gate dividing the two states locked in border disputes since 1971.

Book written by 3-year-old author released in India

New Delhi, July 13 (PTI): Most three-years-old may find it difficult to even form a sentence, but not child prodigy Chryseis Knight who holds the rare distinction of being one of the youngest authors in the world.

"The Great Big Lion", drawn and written by child prodigy Knight, is a story about lion and two children. It talks about friendship, inclusivity, wildlife conservation and the world of imagination.

Earlier published independently abroad, the book was released on Monday for the first time in India under Penguin Random House India's 'Puffin' imprint.

Knight, who is currently residing in Canada, learnt how to read at the age of one, start-

ed writing the story of "The Great Big Lion" in her notebook when she was three years old. She then shared it with her family and became determined to do the artwork with the motivation of getting the book published.

Now seven-years-old, she hopes to inspire children all around the world to embrace the magic in books.

"Tremendously excited that we are publishing this unique book that was written and illustrated by Chryseis when she was merely three! Her writings have an endearing quality; it speaks to children and resonates with them, and the themes she covers are wide-ranging: from wildlife conservation to developing empathy.

Bhanu Jayanti observed at Mangan School

MANGAN, 13 JUL (IPR): The 207th Birth Anniversary of Nepali poet Aadikabi Bhanubhakta Acharya was observed in the auditorium of Mangan Senior Secondary School today.

Additional Political Secretary to CM (North), Tshering Wangyal Bhutia was the chief guest for the programme who was also accompanied by the guest of honour DC (North), Tenzing T Kale-

on, ADM (North), Sonam Lepcha, SDPO (Mangan), Tseten T Bhutia and Officers from various line departments.

To mark their respects and pau homage to the poet, ceremonial lamps were lit and the portrait of Aadikabi Bhanubhakta Acharya was garlanded by the chief guest and the guest of honour.

Dinesh Sapkota of Mangan Girls' Senior

Secondary School read out the life history of Aadikabi Bhanubhakta Acharya and his contribution to Nepali Literature, attributing the late poet for being the first writer to translate Ramayana from Sanskrit to Nepali. He then presented a poem titled "Hamro Nepali Sanskriti".

The programme took place adhering to all COVID-19 protocols.

Singtam observes 207th BhanuJayanti

SUMMIT REPORT SINGTAM, 13 JUL:

The 207th birth anniversary of AdiKaviBhanubhaktaAcharya was celebrated at BhanuUdhyan, Singtam, on 13 July maintaining proper Covid-19 protocols.

Area MLA and Health Minister, Dr MK Sharma, was the chief guest of the day while a prominent Nepali literary writer, Secretary PHE Department, Bindeshwari Prasad was the guest of honour.

The highlight of the day was the presentation of Ramayan Path and Poetry recitation. A felicitation program was also held on the occasion. The chief guest and the other guests were offered khadas as the president of the organizing committee, LN Pradhan.

The program started with the lighting of the lamp by the chief guest and other guests. The guests also paid homage to the Adikavi's statue.

Health Minister, Dr MK Sharma, was felicitated by Advisor to the Chief Minister, Rohit Raj Maharaj, while GajjanandAgarwal (Gajju) was felicitated by the



Health Minister. Further, souvenirs were presented to Advisor to the Chief Minister, Rohit Raj Maharaj, PHE Secretary, Bindeshwari Prasad, Chairperson - RDD, SunitaGautam and KB Chettri.

Addressing the gathering, chief guest, Dr Sharma spoke about the importance of the Nepali Language and the dedication of AdikaviBhanubhakta. His work has

inspired many generations of Nepali-speaking population spread across the world, he added.

Souvenirs were presented to PratikshaBaniya, PrakritDhital, NishanDulal for their Ramayan Path while Mahesh Dahal 'Raley' was given a memento for poetry recitation. SundarRai and Mohan Pradhan 'Neeraj' were the hosts of the day while SK Rai gave the vote of thanks.

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Assam Down Town Univ announces pan-India scholarship

SUMMIT REPORT GUWAHATI, 13 JUL:

Assam down town University (AdtU), Guwahati, one of the leading universities of India has launched a Scholarship Program of upto 1 Crore Rupees for students across the country, stating that the varsity has a variety of placement driven courses.

Students who have appeared in 10+2 exams from any stream, Arts, Science or Commerce, or have already obtained their results are eligible to register free for the scholarship test that is scheduled for 25th July 2021.

The 60 minutes online test will carry questions in MCQ format (Multiple Choice Ques-

tion) with no negative marking. It is important to note that English and G.K sections would be compulsory for all students while they can opt for other papers from their respective subjects/streams.

Candidates can register on or before 22nd July 2021 at <https://bit.ly/366dkeU>. Dr N.N. Dutta, Chancellor of AdtU said, "In this pandemic hit situation AdtU has decided to provide an opportunity to the deserving students across the country to pursue the courses that would help them fulfil their dreams.

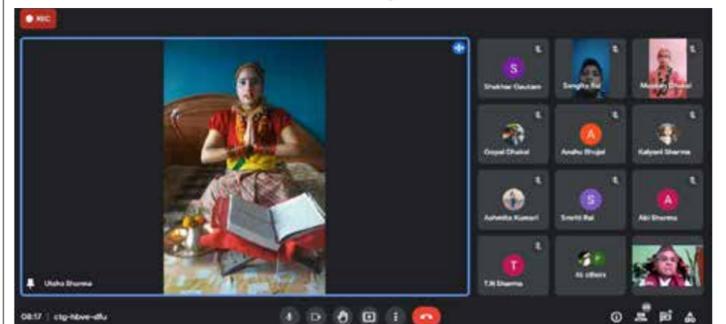
The scholarship will help meritorious students from humble backgrounds and lessen

the financial burden on the parents. It is an initiative to give back to the society and make it a better place."

"This is the first time AdtU has launched such a mega scholarship program and we plan to make it an annual affair. We will hold the Common Scholarship Test nationally so that all the students get a chance to be benefitted from the program" added Prof. N.C. Talukdar, Vice Chancellor, AdtU.

It can be aptly mentioned that AdtU has been recognised as North East India's No #1 placement driven University. It is an institution of academic excellence offering an array of multiple courses.

Tadong School marks BhanuJayanti with literary festival



ARPAN PRADHAN GANGTOK, 13 JUL:

The Language unit of Tadong Senior Secondary School celebrated the 207th BhanuJayantitoday. The school's principal, teachers and students were connected to the program through Google Meet.

To mark the occasion, the school organized a literary festival which had started on 06 July. The festival included inter-school Quiz, self-composed Nepali, Hindi and Lepcha children's poetry among 12 schools of four districts. An inter-school solo Ramayana recitation competition was also held among eight senior schools.

Students from class VI

to XII recited solo Ramayana and Poems of AdikaviBhanubhaktaAcharya wearing traditional dresses. The entire program was organized with the technical assistance of Nepali language teacher TribhuwanDhakal.

In the beginning of today's program, teacher TribhuwanDhakal said that the main purpose of celebrating BhanuJayanti as a weekly festival is not only to pay homage to the Adikavi but also to teach children to preserve and develop the language by making them aware of their language, literature and culture; as such literary activities are an integral part of the students' curriculum. He stated that despite COVID-19,

Tadong School continued normal teaching and learning as well as co-educational activities related to environment, yoga, literature, art, painting, quiz, etc, as per the calendar of this session.

The principal also congratulated the language unit of the school for organizing the program through virtual medium. Expressing happiness on seeing most of the teachers and students virtually connected in today's program, she congratulated the participants and wished them all the best. At the end of the program, it was announced that e-certificates and prizes would be given to all the participants.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.

<p>Symptoms of nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fever ● Difficulty in breathing ● Dry Cough ● Severe acute respiratory syndrome ● Pneumonia - like symptoms 	<p>Precautions to Prevent nCoV</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wash your hands often with soap. ● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer ● Observe good personal hygiene. ● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands. ● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms. ● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats. ● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places. ● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome. and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.
<p>Treatment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition. ● No vaccinations available as of now. ● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected. 	<p>If you seek help, you may call :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Toll free no. 104 District surveillance Officer EAST : 7029372100 WEST : 9593297809 NORTH : 9641957468 SOUTH : 7407691463 New STNM AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Get NE into the History Syllabus

Not only are the stories rich, better introductions are also required

There are now five representatives from the North-east in the Modi cabinet at present, the most in recent times. Hopefully, this will help the region receive better recall in the mainstream. These things take time. It started with achievers, mostly sportspersons like Bhai-chung and Mary Kom and the one Danny Denzongpa to catch national attention and fan following and then the politicians follow and then the region grows in political significance. And better introductions are required. It was after all not such a long time back that Amitabh Bachchan mistakenly referred to Mary Kom as being from Assam [a mistake he quickly corrected], but can he really be faulted for not knowing his Assam from his Manipur? Just as the North East grows up largely unaware of what cultures, languages or people make up South India, so does the rest of India mature without learning anything about the northeast. Cable Television might have replaced books for the young, but school text books still remain the source of much of what Indians grow up learning. And the curriculum is woefully incomplete when it comes to projecting what makes up India.

History, they say is always written by the victor who decides which aspects of the vanquished history suit his greater plans and which bits are best left untold. The same has held true for the history taught in schools in India. The curriculum is embarrassingly North India-centric, so much so that even though students learn by rote the names of all those who made it emperor in the Slave Dynasty, ask them about what the northeast was up to in the meantime and they draw a blank. It is accepted that prior to the advent of the East India Company, there was no concept called India, but the school text books are not of that vintage and should have been compiled to tell stories from all parts of what is now India so that a connect was established early enough in life.

The history we study in school is actually the composite histories of the areas which came together to form the Union of India in 1947 and later. Well, that should have been how things were, but that is not the case. The focus is too limited to the areas which were on the ascendant in the 19th century and beyond. Take a close look at the number of MPs each state has and the number of pages devoted to those areas in books teaching Indian History will be directly proportional to that number. But that's not history. The blind-spotting of areas that got cut off with partition is even worse. The Muslim League for example was a part of the Indian Freedom Struggle and the demand for creation of Pakistan came much after the movement had progressed. We, however, read very little of the role played by this group. Icons like Subhas Chandra Bose and Bhagat Singh too are glossed over. But that's another debate.

Before progressing further it is important to make clear why we study history at all. The main reason is to get a better understanding of where we belong - where we fit into the larger scheme of things. There has been much talk about making Sikkim join the mainstream [as also the rest of the northeast] which is why it is not enough to just study Sikkimese history in schools in Sikkim. Sikkim needs to figure in the history books studied elsewhere in the country. In junior school, students learn of what Confucius meant to China even before they are taught when and how Sikkim joined India. Ask a child, even in Sikkim, which dynasty ruled Sikkim and chances are that you will get the wrong answer. One is not suggesting going parochial here, but Sikkim does have a history that's worth learning. Few dynasties have ruled for the 331 years [two more than even the Mughals] that the Namgyal dynasty has to its credit. The British rule which hogs the history books lasted less than a hundred years and stretched 200 years if we include the East India Company's presence on Indian shores. Surely the Company's intrigues with Tibet should make for interesting reading as should the Gorkha misadventures in Sikkim. There are some who might argue that most of what is passed off as Sikkimese history is actually myth.

Well, it will remain so till some serious study is conducted on it. It might not be out of place to even suggest here that Sikkim should prepare two chapters on Sikkimese history to fit into text books for schools all over the country and take it to the Centre for whetting by the text book boards for inclusion in the syllabi. In fact this is something that all Northeastern States should do. The recent string of events might even pave the way for these chapters to get included in the national curriculum and this could be the one silver lining that the nation draws from the episode...

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Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/ indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

How African countries can reform education to get ahead after pandemic school closures

NOAM ANGRIST
theconversation.com

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a historic shock to education, shuttering schools for over 1.6 billion children worldwide. This shock will worsen a pre-existing "learning crisis" in which many students in school were learning very little. The World Bank estimates that the percentage of children who are unable to read a simple sentence by age 10 could rise from 53% before the pandemic to 63% as a result of school closures.

These learning losses could stem from a combination of things: forgetting what was previously known, and missing what would have been learned if schools hadn't been closed. These learning losses can accumulate in the long run. Students who re-enter school far behind the curriculum expectations might be too far behind to learn anything from daily instruction and fall even further behind.

In a new paper, we looked at how much learning loss might be experienced in Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Tanzania and Uganda as a result of school closures in the pandemic. We used data from early grade reading assessments in these countries. Our model suggests there could be up to a year's worth of learning loss in the short run. Our estimates suggest learning losses will be distributed unequally, with students who started at lower learning levels falling the farthest behind.

We estimate that these short-term learning deficits could accumulate to 2.8 years of lost learning in the long run. This is if the curriculum - often overambitious and not aligned to students' learning levels - is not adjusted to allow students to catch up.

OPPORTUNITY FOR REFORM

But that doesn't have to be the outcome.

While COVID-19 has held back learning, bold reform is possible and the pandemic presents a historic opportunity to revamp education systems.

It could be a time to institute practices and policies that have been needed to address the underlying learning crisis for decades.

Our review of the literature identified two strategies which could help to mitigate learning losses and improve learning even beyond pre-COVID-19 levels. This review builds on a growing evidence base of interventions that have worked at scale in low- and middle-income countries to improve basic numeracy and literacy skills.

The first strategy is to target instruction to a child's learning level. This can be achieved at little cost by testing the child's knowledge during the learning process - known as formative assessment - and a menu of activities tailored to each child's level. This has more potential than teaching prescriptive one-size-fits-all syllabi.

The second strategy is to introduce structured pedagogy programmes, which combine structured lesson plans, teacher coaching and instructional support. Many teachers in the status quo are often left to fend for themselves and write their own daily lesson plans. By providing some structure and ongoing support, big learning gains are possible.

Both approaches in past reviews have been found to improve learning by three years of high-quality schooling gained per US\$100. These learning gains are nearly equivalent to the system-level education gap between Zambia, one of the lowest performers in sub-Saharan Africa, and Kenya, one of the highest performers.

Our model suggests that short-term remediation through these strategies can make a sizeable dent on learning losses. More strikingly, ambitious reforms linked to these strategies, such as aligning instruction with children's learning levels on a long-term basis, can not only mitigate all learning losses, but also improve on pre-COVID-19 learning levels.

SIGNS OF PROGRESS

In our study we describe a few examples of countries which are starting to enact such reforms,

including Botswana and Madagascar. In Botswana's second largest region, the North-East, the Ministry of Basic Education's regional director called for all schools to conduct simple formative assessments and implement targeted instruction immediately as schools reopened in June 2020 following the first wave of COVID-19 induced school closures.

The region updated staff's roles and responsibilities to formalise this expectation. Training sessions were held with support from one of the largest youth-serving NGOs in the country, Young Love, in partnership with USAID and UNICEF. The ministry expected frequent reporting on progress, and the regional director visited schools directly to monitor implementation. Although no causal evidence is available yet, early data suggest learning levels are improving faster than in other regions.

Madagascar provides another example. The government has strengthened the national catch-up programme, called CRAN, which prior to the pandemic had been providing a two-month intensive learning period to children targeted to their level. By the end of 2018, CRAN had been implemented with UNICEF support in seven out of 22 regions of Madagascar. In late 2020, in response to COVID-19 school closures, this approach was accelerated. Although the government and UNICEF are in the early stages of this work, it shows how governments can strengthen existing programmes to shift teaching and learning practices.

These reform efforts are promising. Yet, too few countries have taken bold steps to date. Without urgent action, short-term learning losses could stunt the next generation of students for a lifetime, with potential inter-generational consequences. COVID-19 presents a need to act urgently and an opportunity to think differently. Perhaps some education systems will reform to achieve the long sought-after goal of learning for all.

[the writer is Executive Director, Young Love, Fellow, University of Oxford]



Belief in touch as salvation was stronger than fear of contagion in the Italian Renaissance

UNA ROMAN D'ELIA
theconversation.com

In 1399, a crowd gathered in the Tuscan city of Pisa, even though people understood that a plague ravaging the area was contagious. Devotees travelled from town to town and carried a crucifix - a sculpture of Jesus on the cross - which the crowd longed to touch.

Authorities tried to ban the group but had to bow to public pressure. A witness exclaimed, "Blessed is he who can touch it!" Those who could not reach the sculpture pelted it with offerings, including candles, so that these objects could touch it by proxy.

That year, in the midst of a plague, often hundreds of people gathered and fought to touch and kiss crucifixes. The belief in touch as salvation was stronger than the fear of contagion.

As we are all too aware now, after over a year of social distancing due to COVID-19, touch was and is a much-desired privilege. In the Italian Renaissance, people longed to touch not only each other, but also religious sculptures - touch was a form of devotion.

ACCESSING THE SACRED

Renaissance Italy was home to Jews and Muslims, as well as Christians.

For Christians in the Renaissance, objects could be holy, and so touching them was a way to access the sacred. The cult of relics illustrates this. Relics are physical remains of a saint, either of the saint's body (such as bones) or of something the saint touched.

These holy physical things are

housed in reliquaries, containers to protect and display relics. In the Italian Renaissance, reliquaries took the form of naturalistic sculptures that seemed to bring the saint back to life.

Pilgrims travelled sometimes hundreds of miles on foot to reach these relics - and, for those who could afford it, buy a "contact relic," which was made by submerging the relic in oil and then dipping a cloth into that oil. By touching that cloth, perhaps wearing it as a talisman, the believer was a part of a chain of physical contact that led to the divine.

Others touched reliquaries. A relic of St. Anastasia is embedded in a glass covered receptacle buried in the chest of a lively, blushing sculpture, so that the faithful could see it. The lucky few could reach forward and touch the jewel-like container, as the martyr would seem to look with heavily lidded eyes, almost bemused at this rather intimate gesture.

SCULPTURES WITH JOINTS

People also longed to touch sculptures that did not have relics, including life-sized crucifixes, which in the Renaissance were sculptures of a muscular Jesus, whose body is covered only by a small loincloth. Before Michelangelo, crucifixes were the public nudes in Renaissance cities. Many crucifixes hung high in churches, and Renaissance writers describe saints miraculously elevated, so that they could embrace and kiss the sculpted body of Christ.

Some sculptures have joints in the shoulders, so that at the annual commemoration of Christ's death (on Good Friday) devotees could take part in a sacred drama, in which the figure of Christ was taken down from

the cross and mourned, wrapped in a shroud and placed in a tomb.

During this re-enactment, a lucky few believers could embrace and kiss the sculpture and feel as if they had the ultimate privilege of touching Jesus' body, reciting the prayer: "I, a sinner, am not worthy to touch you."

IN THE HOME

Wealthy families had sculptures that they could touch at home, such as small crucifixes, which often have feet worn down by repeated touch so that the toes are barely visible.

Young women getting married or becoming nuns were given painted wooden life-sized sculptures of baby Jesus or another infant saint, which they would tend as if they were real infants, dressing them in luxurious clothing.

Meditational handbooks told women to imagine that they were fondling baby Jesus.

Anyone who could afford it would have an image of the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus in the bedroom. These sculptures place emphasis on touch, as Mary and Jesus' limbs are gently intertwined.

But wealthy parents rarely touched their children - infants were sent away to live with a wetnurse until about the age of three, and handbooks on child rearing warned parents not to embrace their children when they returned home. So, in some cases, mothers may have touched sculptures of babies more than they touched their own children.

INTERACTING WITH SCULPTURES

Though devotional touch was a privilege for the wealthy, practices of interacting with sculptures as if they

were bodies of flesh and blood cut across social classes.

A pair of life-sized painted terracotta sculptures of the Virgin Mary and her husband Joseph watched over a stone crib at Florence's orphanage, the Ospedale degli Innocenti. Abandoned infants were placed temporarily in the care of these sculpted parents.

The figure of Mary was sculpted only with a simple red under dress, with no cloak or veil, and so was likely dressed in fabric clothing, probably donated by a local woman. Women would have also dressed and undressed this sculpture and others like it as an act of devotion, as it would be scandalous to have a man be so intimate with a sculpture of the Virgin Mary.

SCULPTED BODIES INHABITED CITIES

Sculpted bodies inhabited Renaissance cities along with living people, filling Renaissance churches, watching over the streets and gracing the bedrooms of even moderately wealthy patricians.

In a society that was ambivalent about the proprieties of touching living flesh, touching sculpted bodies could offer comfort or even salvation.

Renaissance philosophers and clergymen argued that touch was sensual and earthy and that supposedly weak-minded women and children were more in need of such physical aids in their devotions than educated men.

But ultimately, touching art was a privilege, a way of touching the divine.

[the writer is Professor, Art History and Art Conservation, Queen's University, Ontario]

Nepali Congress President SherBahadurDeuba appointed prime minister of Nepal

KATHMANDU, 13 JUL [KATHMANDUPOST]: President Bidya Devi Bhandari has appointed Nepali Congress President SherBahadurDeuba as next prime minister of the country.

"The President has appointed SherBahadurDeuba as the prime minister of the country as per Article 76 (5) of the constitution," Bhesh Raj Adhikari, chief personal secretary to the President told the Post.

The Office of the President is also preparing to administer the oath of office and secrecy to Deuba at 6pm Tuesday, he said.

The Supreme Court overturned Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli's May 21 decision to dissolve the House on Monday and instructed the Office of President to appoint Deuba as next prime minister as per his petition. In a landmark decision,



the five-member Constitutional Bench had ruled that rejection of Deuba's claim to be appointed prime minister with the support of 149 lawmakers of the 275-member House of Representatives

as per Article 76 (5) was unconstitutional.

Deuba is set to take the oath of office and secrecy by Tuesday evening and is likely to form a small Cabinet.

Ministers to be induct-

ed in the Cabinet are yet to be chosen. Nepali Congress President Deuba and Chairman of the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist Center) Pushpa Kamal Dahal are meeting over Cabinet formation before he takes the

oath of office, a senior Nepali Congress leader said.

"Once it [the meeting] is over, the names of new ministers will be announced," he told the Post on condition of anonymity.

76 pc of eligible population vaccinated in Tripura

AGARTALA, JUL 13 (PTI): Over 76 per cent of the eligible population of Tripura have been inoculated against Covid-19 and around 25 per cent got both doses of the vaccine, an official said on Tuesday.

The positivity rate of coronavirus in the state currently is 4.3 per cent and it is likely to decline after two weeks.

Of the 26.24 lakh people who are eligible for inoculation, over 20 lakh (76.22 per cent) have received the vaccine while 6.47 lakh (24.64 per cent) have taken both doses, National Health

Mission (NHM) director in Tripura, Dr Siddhartha Shiv Jaiswal, said. Tripura has a population of 40.19 lakh in March.

"As many as 16.3 lakh people fall in the 18-44 age group (62.1 per cent) and 9.94 lakh are in the category of 45+ (37.9 per cent)," Jaiswal said.

The state NHM director said that 57.98 per cent of all frontline workers have already received both the vaccine doses.

State Surveillance Officer (SSO) for COVID 19, Deep Debarma, said that the positivity rate of Covid-19 is likely to go down after two weeks.

"The first wave and the second wave of coronavirus have hit the state at least two months after Delhi or the other parts of the country, so it is natural that the positivity rate would also start declining late here.

"We expect that the rate would start declining two weeks from now in Tripura," Debarma said.

At least 1,800 oxygen-equipped beds are now available in the state, Jaiswal said.

Oxygen plants have also been set up in four hospitals, the NHM director added.

'The Queen's Gambit,' 'Ted Lasso' vie for Emmy nominations

LOS ANGELES (AP): "The Crown" and "Ted Lasso," among the TV shows that helped distract America during an oppressive pandemic year, are in the hunt for Emmy recognition.

The nominations for the 73rd Primetime Emmy Awards will be announced Tuesday by father-and-daughter actors Ron Cephas Jones ("This Is Us") and Jasmine Cephas Jones ("Blindspotting"), and TV academy chief executive Frank Scherma.

In its fourth season, the British royal drama "The Crown" moved closer to contemporary events with its version of the courtship and rocky marriage of Prince Charles and Diana Spencer, played by Josh O'Connor and Emma Corrin.

The actors are among the favorites for Emmy nods, along with Olivia Colman as Queen Elizabeth II and Gillian Anderson as Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

For Netflix, which led the way for the rise of streaming services but has yet to claim a top series trophy, "The Crown" may represent its best bet. It's been nominated three times before.

"Ted Lasso," a feel-

good comedy about a middling American football coach abruptly imported to England to take over a soccer team, could snare nominations for star Jason Sudeikis and cast members including Hannah Waddingham and Nick Mohammed.

Contenders in the miniseries category include "The Queen's Gambit," with breakout star Anya Taylor-Joy as a troubled chess prodigy, and "The Underground Railroad," based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel by Colson Whitehead and created by Oscar-winning director Barry Jenkins ("Moonlight").

ThusoMbedu and Aaron Pierre, who star in the wrenching depiction of U.S. slavery combined with elements of magical realism, are potential nominees.

"Lovecraft Country," which spins a tale about mid-20th-century racism with elements of horror, is up for drama series honors despite its cancellation by HBO after one season.

"The Mandalorian" and "WandaVision" are among the sci-fi and fantasy genre shows in contention.

Also vying for Emmy consideration are shows

that made a splash and boast movie stars, including the crime miniseries "Mare of Easttown" with Kate Winslet and "The Undoing" with Nicole Kidman and Hugh Grant.

TV academy voters have a chance to build on the inclusiveness of last year's acting nominations, which included a record number of Black nominees — 35 — among the 102 contenders for lead, supporting and guest performances in drama, comedy and limited series or TV movie.

At slightly more than 34% of nominees, that improved on the 2018 record of just under 28% of Black actors in those categories. Voters also have the chance to recognize other actors of color, including Rosie Perez for the comedy thriller "The Flight Attendant," and trans actors Mj Rodriguez and Angelica Ross for "Pose."

The Sept. 10 ceremony, which last year was held virtually because of the COVID-19 pandemic, will air live on CBS from a theater and include a limited in-person audience of nominees and guests. Cedric the Entertainer is the host.

Bengal logs 885 new COVID-19 cases, 11 more fatalities

KOLKATA, JUL 12 (PTI): As many as 885 fresh COVID-19 cases were reported from West Bengal on Monday, pushing the caseload to 15,13,014, a health department bulletin said.

The COVID-19 death toll went up to 17,927 with 11 more fatalities.

While there were no COVID-19 deaths reported from North 24 Parganas district on Monday, the city registered only

one death, the bulletin said. The state now has 14,531 active cases and 14,80, 556 patients have recovered thus far, including 1,244 in the last 24 hours.

In the last 24 hours, 45,287 samples have been tested for COVID-19.

Meanwhile, 1,93,811 people have been inoculated in the state on Monday, an official of the health department said.

NLFB militant killed in police encounter in Assam

GUWAHATI, JUL 13 (PTI): A militant of the National Liberation Front of Bodoland (NLFB) outfit was killed in a police encounter in Assam's Udalguri district on Tuesday.

Acting on a tip-off, police launched an operation in Dimachang in Mazbat police station area and the outfit's self-styled Udalguri district commander was killed in an encounter, Special Di-

rector General of Police G P Singh said.

"Early this morning, one Jayphrush @ N Jwng-khwl... was killed in police operation in Dimachang area of Mazbat police station of Udalguri district," Singh tweeted.

A pistol and several cartridges were seized from the encounter site, he added.

The slain militant was a close associate of

former NDFB leader M Batha who had surrendered along with several other cadres during the signing of the third Bodo Peace Accord in January 2020 but later returned to the forest to set up the NLFB.

The outfit is mostly involved in extortion in the districts under the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), police sources said.

Suwendu Adhikari meets Governor, wants Mukul Roy out of assembly panel



KOLKATA, 13 JUL [NDTV]: The BJP's Suwendu Adhikari met Bengal Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar this evening to flag the appointment of Trinamool Congress's Mukul Roy as the chairman of the key Public Accounts Committee. Seeking the Governor's intervention, he said the appointment is a violation of law.

An opposition MLA is always appointed as the PAC chairman, and the Trinamool has misused that rule, Mr Adhikari contends.

The Governor's handle tweeted about the meeting.

"A Delegation of opposition MLAs led by the Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari called on WB Governor Shri

Jagdeep Dhankhar at Raj Bhawan Kolkata today at 4 PM. Leader of Opposition submitted a representation as regards irregularities relating to PAC Chairman in Legislative Assembly," his post read.

The BJP has been protesting against the appointment of Mukul Roy, who recently went back to the ruling Trinamool Congress after a brief stay in the party.

Mr Roy, who changed camp last month after Trinamool's big victory in the assembly elections, has not resigned from his assembly seat Krishnanagar Uttar, which he won on a BJP ticket.

The Trinamool has argued that Mr Roy is still a member of the BJP

in the Assembly and is eligible for appointment.

The party's senior leader Subrata Mukherjee said. "Mr Roy continues to be a BJP member in the Assembly."

"It has been a long-established tradition to appoint a senior leader of the opposition camp, who has experience in Parliament, as the PAC chairman. The speaker has simply followed that norm," he was quoted as saying by news agency Press Trust of India.

Ace Trinamool strategist Mukul Roy, who had joined the BJP in 2017, returned to the ruling party with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee having an active role in his homecoming.

Dibrugarh gets new flight to Imphal

DIBRUGARH, JUL 13 (PTI): Dibrugarh in eastern Assam is now connected with Manipur capital Imphal with the commencement of a new flight.

Indigo flight 6E 7948 will connect Kolkata and Imphal with Dibrugarh, daily. It will take around 1 hour and 15 minutes to reach Imphal from Dibrugarh. The domestic carrier started the flight on Monday under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS), an official statement said.

Dibrugarh already has flights to Agartala (Tripura) and Dimapur (Nagaland), besides Gu-

wahati. This is the third flight under the RCS to start its operations from Dibrugarh.

The increase in the number of flights along with connections to various destinations is making Dibrugarh an aviation hub, said Airport Director R Awasthi.

At present, there are nine flights departing from Dibrugarh airport, which handles around 1,200 Passengers every day, he said.

"And we are optimistic that once the restrictions are lifted, the airport will reach its pre-COVID level air traffic growth," he added.

Four detained in TMC leader's murder case

MANGALKOT (WB), JUL 13 (PTI): At least four persons were detained on Tuesday for their alleged involvement in the killing of a local TMC leader in West Bengal's Purba Bardhaman district, a senior police officer said.

Sleuths of the state Criminal Investigation Department, during the day, visited the site in Mangalkot, where Ashim Das -- the 'anchal' (area) president of the TMC -- was shot dead by bike-borne men on Monday evening, and collected samples as part of their investigation.

Das was declared "brought dead" when locals

took him to a nearby hospital. "We have not arrested anyone so far but have detained four persons in connection with the incident. It seems that the killers were known to Das. We are trying to find out the reason... it could be due to a personal feud or some political rivalry," the officer said.

The TMC and the BJP have been trading barbs since the incident on Monday, with the ruling party alleging that members of the rival outfit orchestrated the attack, and the saffron camp claiming that the death was a fallout of TMC's internal feud.

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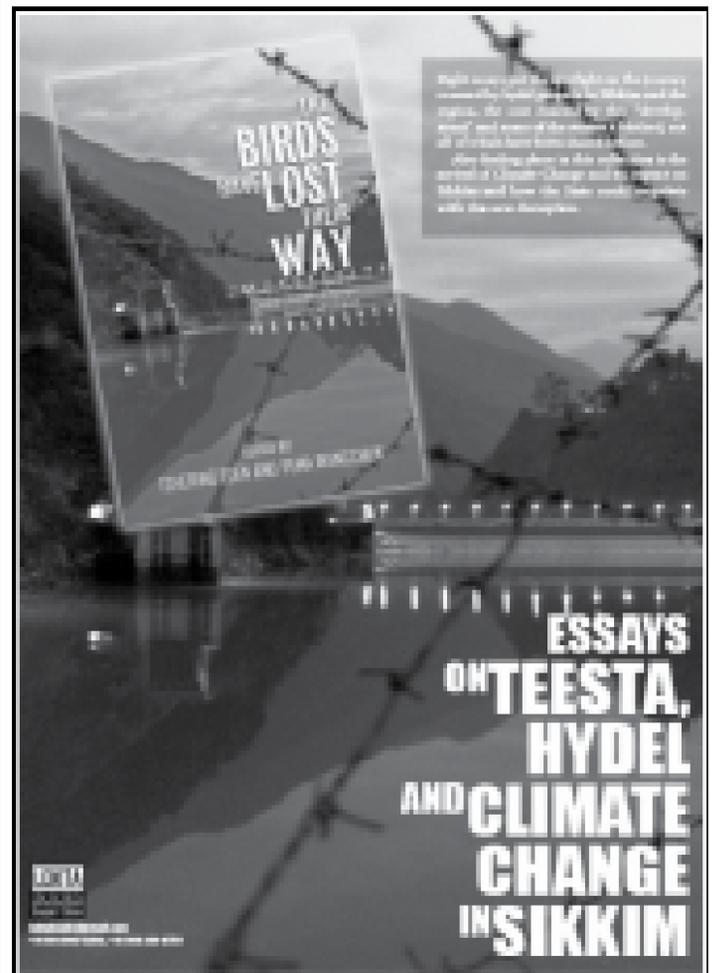
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F1 driver Norris says his watch stolen after Euro 2020 final

LONDON (AP): Formula One driver Lando Norris says his watch was stolen after he left the European Championship final at Wembley Stadium.

Norris was unharmed but "shaken" by the incident on Sunday night, and the British driver was being supported by his McLaren team ahead of the British Grand Prix this weekend at Silverstone.

"McLaren Racing can confirm that Lando Norris was involved in an incident, after the Euro 2020 final match at Wembley, during which the watch he was wearing was taken," the team said in a statement.

"Thankfully, Lando was unharmed but he is understandably shaken. The team is supporting Lando and we are sure that racing fans will join us in wishing him all the best for the British Grand Prix this weekend.

"As this is now a police matter we cannot comment further."

The theft is one more off-field incident that has overshadowed England's loss to Italy after a penalty shootout in the final.

The security operation around Wembley has been widely criticized following arrests and injuries after ticketless people broke through police lines to get into Wembley Stadium and caused havoc.

World champ cyclist Peter Sagan to miss Tokyo Olympics

BRATISLAVA, SLOVAKIA (AP): Three-time world champion Peter Sagan will miss the Tokyo Olympics after he had surgery to treat an infection in his right knee that occurred following a crash at the Tour de France.

The Slovak Olympic Committee and the Slovak Cycling Federation said Sagan won't be able to fully recover in time for the Tokyo Games.

They announced the news on Tuesday, a day after the surgery near Sagan's home in Monaco.

Sagan tangled with Caleb Ewan on the third stage of the Tour and went down hard at high speed. The knee was hit by the chainring on his bike, leaving a deep gash that his Bora-Hansgrohe team treated with antibiotic ointment for the past 10 days. But eventually the infection became too serious for Sagan to continue with the race.

The 31-year-old Sagan was expected to compete alongside older brother Juraj Sagan for Slovakia in the Olympic road race in 11 days.

The Slovak Olympic Committee said Lukáš Kubiš will replace Sagan in Tokyo.

Sagan, one of the most accomplished cyclists of the past decade, skipped the road race at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympics and, instead, competed in mountain biking. But a punctured tire early in the race ruined his medal chances.

Women's T20: India aim for complete performance in series-decider against England

CHELMSFORD, JUL 13 (PTI): The Indian women's cricket team would aim to put up a complete performance instead of relying on individual brilliance to topple a hurting England for its first T20 series victory since 2019 here on Wednesday.

Another impressive outing in the field and tight death over bowling from the spin duo of Poonam Yadav and Deepti Sharma brought India back from the dead in the second T20 on Sunday.

And now Harmanpreet Kaur and her players have a chance of enjoying their first T20 series success after the 2019 away triumph against the West Indies.

England self-destructing from a commanding position also helped the visitors level the series in Hove.

The hosts are unlikely to gift another match to India, who will need to excel in all departments to win the series.

While Shafali Verma was impressive at the top and spinners came to India's rescue later in the game, the middle-order and the pace



department needs to step up.

Harmanpreet, who promoted herself to number three and got much needed runs, would be well served by doing the same.

Shafali had got the team off to a cracking start but the incoming batters were not able to maintain the momen-

tum despite wickets in hand. On the contrary, England batters kept going for their strokes despite loss of wickets at regular intervals.

There is little point in saving wickets in the shortest format and India need to be more aggressive in their approach to score a 160-plus to-

tal. Pacers Shikha Pandey and Arundhati Reddy, who were all over the place on Sunday, will have to be much more accurate.

England lead the multi-format series 8-6 and therefore can't lose it. Skipper Heather Knight was expectedly gutted after losing the game

from a pretty commanding position. Expect England to be more ruthless on Wednesday.

"We were in a great position and asked the batting group to be ruthless, we got to be better in the next game. We got a strong batting line up and shouldn't be losing that," said Knight. There were as many

as four run-outs in England's innings, reflecting a panic situation when they could have sailed to a series win. Opener Danielle Wyatt, who made a comeback with this rubber, is due for a big score.

The battle between pacer Katherine Brunt and Shafali at the top has become more interesting with the Indian hammering her for five successive boundaries after being bowled by the English woman in the series-opener.

Teams (from):

India: Harmanpreet Kaur (captain) Smriti Mandhana, Deepti Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Shafali Verma, Richa Ghosh, Harleen Deol, Sneha Rana, Taniya Bhatia, Indrani Roy, Shikha Pandey, Pooja Vastrakar, Arundhati Reddy, Poonam Yadav, Ekta Bisht, Radha Yadav, Simran Dil Bahadur.

England: Heather Knight (captain), Tammy Beaumont, Katherine Brunt, Freya Davies, Sophia Dunkley, Sophie Ecclestone, Tash Farrant, Sarah Glenn, Amy Jones, Nat Sciver, Anya Shrubsole, Mady Villiers, Fran Wilson, Danni Wyatt.

Match starts 11 PM IST.

India's 1983 World Cup hero Yashpal Sharma dies of cardiac arrest

NEW DELHI, JULY 13 (PTI): India's 1983 World Cup hero Yashpal Sharma, who was admired for being a gutsy middle-order batsman at the peak of his prowess, died on Tuesday after suffering a massive cardiac arrest here.

He was 66 and is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son.

"Yes, Yashpal is no more with us. We just received the information from his family," a former India teammate of Yashpal confirmed to PTI.

According to sources, Yashpal collapsed at home after returning from his morning walk here.

In his international career, Yashpal played 37 Tests, scoring 1606 runs, and 42 ODIs in which he made 883. He also picked up one wicket each in the two formats to his credit.

He was known for his gutsy attitude and his stroke-filled half century in the semifinal against England in the 1983 campaign at the Old Trafford

will forever be etched in the public memory.

He was also a national selector during early part of 2000s.

Former India captain Dilip Vengsarkar expressed shock at his teammate's demise. The 1983 squad had met on the sidelines of a book launch here couple of weeks ago.

"It is unbelievable. He was the fittest among all of us. I had asked him that day when we met how about his routine. He was a vegetarian, teetotaler, used to have soup for his dinner and very particular about his morning walks. I am just shocked," Vengsarkar told PTI.

"As a player, he was a proper team man and a fighter. I fondly remember the 1979 Test against Pakistan in Delhi. We both had a partnership which helped us save the game. I knew him since my university days. Still can't believe it," he added.

In Ranji Trophy,

where he represented three teams -- Punjab, Haryana and Railways --, Yashpal played 160 matches amassing 8,933 runs which included 21 centuries with a highest score of 201 not out.

He was an umpire too and stood in a couple of women's ODIs. The multi-faceted former player also served as coach of the Uttar Pradesh Ranji team.

"He told me that day we met that I had lost weight. We had a great reunion. I remember the very first game in the 1983 World Cup playing the mighty West Indies with those fast bowlers, he set the agenda and we won that game," said former teammate Kirti Azad.

"He was again fantastic in the semifinal hitting Bob Willis for a six. Nowadays people say (Ravindra) Jadeja hits stumps regularly but so did Yashpal. He was a livewire on the field and would hit stumps all the time," he recalled.

5 Italians, no Ronaldo in Euro 2020 team of the tournament

NYON, SWITZERLAND (AP): Five players from European champion Italy and no Cristiano Ronaldo, Kylian Mbappé nor Robert Lewandowski were picked in UEFA's official team of the tournament announced on Tuesday.

The attacking trio included Federico Chiesa alongside Raheem Sterling of beaten finalist England and Romelu Lukaku of Belgium, which lost to Italy in the quarterfinals.

Ronaldo won the Golden Boot with five goals, the same as Patrick Schick of the Czech Republic who was also overlooked by UEFA's expert panel of 16 coaches and former players.

Lukaku, who scored four goals in four games, is the only one of the six top scorers at Euro 2020



included in the lineup.

Mbappé did not score in four games and had his decisive spot kick saved as France was eliminated by Switzerland in the round of 16.

Lewandowski, the current FIFA best player in the world, scored three times in three games but Poland finished last in its group.

England captain Harry Kane scored four goals yet did not make

the team that also included his teammates Kyle Walker and Harry Maguire in defense.

Italy's contingent included the official best player of the tournament, goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma, defenders Leonardo Bonucci and Leonardo Spinazzola, and midfielder Jorginho.

The selectors included Fabio Capello, Robbie Keane, Esteban Cambiasso and David Moyes.

Iyer named for Mumbai's fitness camp; Arjun also in

MUMBAI, JUL 13 (PTI): India batsman Shreyas Iyer, who is recovering from a shoulder injury, has been included in the list of 45 players announced by the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) for its fitness camp.

The 26-year-old Iyer had sustained a shoulder injury during the ODI series against England in March earlier this year and was subsequently ruled out of the IPL, which was eventually suspended midway following multiple COVID-19 cases.

The stylish right-handed top-order batsman had undergone a shoulder injury in April and has been recovering since then at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bangalore.

Apart from Iyer, the Mumbai selectors led by former India speedster Salil Ankolekar have included India regulars like Rohit Sharma, Ajinkya Rahane, Suryakumar Yadav, Shardul Thakur, Prithvi



Shaw for the camp.

Legendary Sachin Tendulkar's son Arjun, a budding left-arm pacer also has been named among the players, which were chosen for the camp.

"The schedule of the fitness camp will be announced in due course of time," MCA said in a release on its website.

Selected players: Rohit Sharma, Ajinkya Rahane, Shreyas Iyer, Suryakumar Yadav, Shardul Thakur, Prithvi

Khan, Shubham Ranjane, Sujit Nayak, Sairaj Patil, Prasad Pawar, Shams Mulani, Atharva Ankolekar, Dhruvil Matkar, Shreyas Gurav, Tanush Kotian, Ankush Jaiswal, Shashank Attarde, Prashant Solanki, Parikshit Valsangkar, Tushar Deshpande, Mohit Awasthi, Nikhil Date, Roystan Dias, Atif Attarwala, Siddharth Raut, Kruthik Hangawadi, Deepak Shetty, Ravi Solanki.

Germany launches 'space command' to protect infrastructure

BERLIN (AP): The German military on Tuesday launched a "space command" tasked with overseeing satellites, watching for dangerous space junk and analyzing other countries' activities.

Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer launched the new operation during a visit to its base at Uedem in western Germany.

The military is "responding to the increasing significance of space for our state's ability to function, the prosperity of our population and the increasing dependency of the armed forces on space-supported data, services and products," Kramp-Karrenbauer's ministry said in a statement.

The aim is to bring together existing capabilities in one place, where the military's center for air operations is already based, and add new ones.

Kramp-Karrenbauer said that



the term "Weltraumkommando," or "space command," might draw far-fetched associations with the novels of Jules Verne or starship Enterprise, but the reality is "far from being so sensational," news agency dpa reported.

The German military, or Bundeswehr, itself has six satellites in orbit. The minister said

space operations for Germany "are always defensive operations" - for example to ensure that infrastructure isn't endangered. The United States already has a Space Command, whose role is to conduct operations such as enabling satellite-based navigation and troop communication and providing warning of missile launches.

Mystery grows with key suspect in Haiti president killing

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAITI (AP): A physician. A church pastor. A failed Florida businessman who filed for bankruptcy.

New details that have emerged about a man considered a key player in the killing of Haiti's president deepened the mystery over the assassination that shocked this nation of more than 11 million people as it faces an uncertain future.

Local authorities identified the suspect as Christian Emmanuel Sanon, 62, a Haitian who once expressed a desire to lead his country in a YouTube video. However he is unknown in Haitian political circles, and associates suggested he was duped by those really behind the slaying of President Jovenel Moïse in an attack last week that critically wounded his wife, Martine.

A Florida friend of Sanon told The Associated Press the suspect is an evangelical Christian pastor and also is a licensed physician in Haiti, but not in the U.S. The associate, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of safety concerns, said Sanon told him he was approached by people claiming to represent the U.S. State and Justice departments who wanted to install him as president.

He said the plan was only for Moïse to be arrested, and Sanon would not have participated if he knew Moïse would be killed.

"I guarantee you that," the associate said. "This was supposed to be a mission to save Haiti from hell, with support from the U.S. government."

Echoing those sentiments was the Rev. Larry Caldwell, a Florida pastor, who said he worked with Sanon setting up churches and medical clinics in Haiti in 2000-2010. He doesn't believe Sanon would have been involved in violence.

"I know the character of the man," Caldwell said. "You take a man like that and you're then going to say he participated in a brutal crime of murder, knowing that being associated with that would send him to the pits of hell? ... If there was one man who would be willing to stand in the breach to help his country, it would be Christian."

Haiti's National Police chief, Léon Charles, said Moïse's kill-



ers were protecting Sanon, whom he accused of working with those who plotted the assassination.

Charles said officers found a hat with the logo of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, 20 boxes of bullets, gun parts, 20 license plates from the Dominican Republic, two cars and correspondence, among other things, in Sanon's house in Haiti.

Twenty-six former Colombian soldiers are suspected in the killing, and 23 have been arrested, along with three Haitians. Charles said five suspects are still at large and at least three have been killed.

A U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration official told AP that one of the suspects in Moïse's assassination was at times a confidential source to the agency, and that the suspect reached out to his contacts at the DEA after the killing and was urged to surrender. The official said the DEA and a U.S. State Department official provided information to Haiti's government that led to the surrender and arrest of one suspect and one other individual, whom it didn't identify. Meanwhile, Colombia's na-

tional police chief, Gen. Jorge Luis Vargas, said that a Florida-based enterprise, CTU Security, used its company credit card to buy 19 plane tickets from Bogota to Santo Domingo for Colombian suspects. Most arrived in the Dominican Republic in June and moved into Haiti within weeks, Vargas said.

He said Dimitri Héraud, head of general security at Haiti's National Palace, flew to Colombia, Ecuador and Panama in the months before the assassination, and Colombian police are investigating whether he had any role in recruiting the mercenaries. In Haiti, prosecutors are seeking to interrogate Héraud as part of the assassination investigation.

Charles said that Sanon was in contact with CTU Security and that the company recruited the suspects in the killing. He said Sanon flew into Haiti in June on a private jet accompanied by several of the alleged gunmen.

The suspects were told their job was to protect Sanon, but they were later ordered to arrest the president, Charles said.

Charles said that after Moïse

was killed, one suspect called Sanon, who got in touch with two people believed to be masterminds of the plot. He did not identify the masterminds or say if police know who they are.

Sanon's associate said he attended a recent meeting in Florida with Sanon and about a dozen other people, including Antonio Enmanuel Intriago Valera, a Venezuelan émigré to Miami who runs CTU Security. He said a presentation was made for rebuilding Haiti, including its water system, converting trash into energy and fixing roads.

He said Sanon asked why the security team accompanying him to Haiti were all Colombians. Sanon was told that Haitians couldn't be trusted and that the system is corrupt, the associate said. He said Sanon called him from Haiti a few days before the assassination and said the Colombians had disappeared.

"I'm all by myself. Who are these people? I don't know what they are doing," the associate quoted Sanon as saying.

Sanon "is completely gullible,"

the associate added. "He thinks God is going to save everything."

Sanon has lived in Kansas City, Missouri and in Florida, where he filed for bankruptcy in 2013 and identified himself as a medical doctor in a YouTube video titled "Leadership for Haiti" in which he denounced the country's leadership as corrupt and accused them of stripping the country's resources.

However, records show Sanon has never been licensed to practice medicine or any other occupation covered by Florida's Department of Health.

Sanon said in court papers filed in his 2013 bankruptcy case that he was a physician and a pastor at the Tabarre Evangelical Tabernacle in Haiti. He said he had stakes in enterprises including the Organization of Rome Haiti, which he identified as a non-governmental group, a radio station in Haiti and medical facilities in Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

At the time of his bankruptcy, he and his wife reported income of \$5,000 per month, and a

home in Brandon, Florida, valued at about \$143,000, with a mortgage of more than \$367,000. A federal bankruptcy trustee later determined they hid ownership of about 35 acres in Haiti from creditors.

Florida records show Sanon started about a dozen businesses over the last 20 years, all of which failed, including ones that appeared related to medical imaging, physical therapy, fossil fuel trading, real estate and veganism.

Sanon's arrest comes as a growing number of politicians have challenged interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph, who is currently in charge of Haiti with backing from police and the military.

U.S. officials, including representatives from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Department of Homeland Security, met Sunday with Joseph, designated Prime Minister Ariel Henry and Joseph Lambert, the head of Haiti's dismantled Senate, whom supporters have named as provisional president in a challenge to Joseph, according to the White House National Security Council.

The delegation also met with Haiti's National Police and reviewed the security of critical infrastructure, it said.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki said the delegation received a request for additional assistance. She said deployment of U.S. troops remained "under review," but also suggested that Haiti's political uncertainty was a complicating factor.

"What was clear from their trip is that there is a lack of clarity about the future of political leadership," Psaki said.

U.S. President Joe Biden said he was closely following developments, adding: "The people of Haiti deserve peace and security, and Haiti's political leaders need to come together for the good of their country."

Meanwhile, U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq said Haiti's request for security assistance is being examined.

The United Nations has been involved in Haiti on and off since 1990, but the last U.N. military peacekeepers left the country in 2017.

Taliban surge in north Afghanistan sends thousands fleeing

CAMP ISTIQLAL (AFGHANISTAN), JUL 13 (AP): Sakina, who is 11, maybe 12, walked with her family for 10 days after the Taliban seized her village in northern Afghanistan and burned down the local school.

They are now among around 50 families living in a makeshift camp on a rocky patch of land on the edge of the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif.

They roast in plastic tents under scorching heat that reaches 44 degrees Celsius at midday. There are no trees, and the only bathroom for the entire camp is a tattered tent pitched over a foul-smelling hole.

As the Taliban surge through northern Afghanistan a traditional stronghold of US-allied warlords and an area dominated by the country's ethnic minorities thousands of families like Sakina's are fleeing their homes, fearful of living under the insurgents' rule.

In the last 15 days, Taliban advances have driven more than 5,600 families from their homes, most of them in the northern reaches of the country, according to the government's Refugee and Repatriations Ministry.

In Camp Istiqlal, family after family, all from the Hazara ethnic minority, told of Taliban commanders using heavy-handed tactics as they overran their towns and villages raising doubts among many over their persistent promises amid negotiations that they will not repeat their harsh rule of the past.

Sakina said it was the middle of the night when her parents packed up their belongings and fled their village of Abdulgan in Balkh province, but not before the invading Taliban set fire to her school. Sakina said she doesn't understand why her school was burned.

In Camp Istiqlal, there's not a single light, and sometimes she hears noises in the pitch blackness of night. I think

maybe it's the Taliban and they have come here. I am afraid, said the girl, who hopes one day to be an engineer.

Yaqub Maradi fled his village of Sang Shanda, not far from Abdulgan, when the Taliban arrived. He said they tried to intimidate villagers into staying. Maradi's brother and several members of his family were arrested, held hostage to stop them from leaving, he said.

Maybe he is released today, but he cannot leave, Maradi said from inside his small sweltering plastic tent pitched over a sunbaked mud floor, with mattresses folded in one corner.

A howling, brutally hot wind ripped through the tent as Mohammad Rahimi, the self-appointed camp leader, who also fled from Abdulgan, recalled how a poorly equipped militia force in his Zari district tried to defend against a larger Taliban force. Rahimi named a handful of militia fighters he said died defending their district.

In areas they control, the Taliban have imposed their own fees and taxes. Ashor Ali, a truck driver, told The Associated Press he pays the Taliban a 12,000 Afghani (147) toll for every load of coal he brings from a Taliban-controlled part of neighboring Samangan province to Mazar-e-Sharif. That amounts to more than half of what he makes on each haul.

The Taliban are attending international conferences, even sending their ex-ministers on missions to Afghanistan from Qatar, where they have a political office, to assure Afghans they have nothing to fear from them, especially minorities. The group still espouses Islamic rule but says its methods and tenets are less severe.

But if it's a gentler face they are seeking to portray, fleeing residents say it seems many Taliban commanders in the field either haven't gotten the message or aren't listening.

A February 2020 agreement the Taliban signed with the United States reportedly prevents the insurgents from capturing provincial capitals. Yet two Kandahar in the south and Badghis in the north are under siege. In the capital of Kabul, where many fear an eventual Taliban assault, a rocket defense system has been installed, the Ministry of Interior said over the weekend. The statement offered no detail about its origin or cost.

The US, Russia, China and even Afghanistan's neighbor Pakistan, where the Taliban leadership council is headquartered, have all warned the Taliban against trying for a military victory, warning they will be international pariahs.

Taliban leaders have vowed they are not doing so, even as they boast of their gains in recent meetings in Iran and in Russia.

The Taliban blame the Afghan government for foiling efforts to jumpstart stalled talks that would elevate discussions to include leaders on both sides of the conflict.

Suhail Shaheen, the Taliban's political spokesman and a member of its negotiation team, told the AP that on three different occasions his side waited for a high-level delegation from Kabul to come to Doha for talks. They never came, he said.

The Kabul delegation was to include former President Hamid Karzai, as well as Abdullah Abdullah, the head of the National Reconciliation Council, and senior warlords like Ata Mohammad Noor, one of the most powerful northern commanders.

Afghan officials familiar with the planned meetings confirmed their intent to travel to Doha and participate, but said President Ashraf Ghani has been reluctant, often obstructing efforts. They spoke on condition of ano-

nymity to discuss the negotiations with reporters.

Last week, President Joe Biden urged Afghanistan's leaders to find unity and said it was up to Afghans to bring an end to decades of war. With 90% of the final US and NATO withdrawal completed and its top commander Gen. Scott Miller having relinquished his command, Washington is nearing the end of its forever war.

Maradi, whose brother was refused permission to leave, said he doesn't trust the Taliban promises.

Many are still haunted by memories of the tit-for-tat massacres that had characterized the Taliban rule in areas dominated by Afghanistan's ethnic minorities in the late 1990s.

Mazar-e-Sharif was the scene of horrific bloodletting. In 1997, Uzbek and Hazara fighters killed some 2,000 ethnic Pashtun Taliban, who were captured in the city after a truce deal fell through. In some case, they forced the captives to jump into pits on the plains north of the city, then threw in grenades and sprayed them with automatic weapons. The next year, the Taliban rampaged through Mazar-e-Sharif, killing thousands of Hazaras and driving tens of thousands more out fleeing to Kabul.

At Camp Istiqlal life is brutal. There's little water to wash, most meals are bread and tea brought to the camp by Rahimi, the leader. Fatima, who cradled her sickly 2-month-old daughter Kobra, said she hadn't had much food or drink since arriving about one week ago and was unable to produce enough milk to feed her infant. Another mother showed blisters covering the arms and legs of her 2-year-old son, Mohammad Nabi. In the nighttime blackness he knocked over scalding water. They said they have no money for a doctor.

CORONAVIRUS
PRECAUTIONS & SAFETY TIPS
DON'T LOWER THE GUARD

LOCKDOWN HAS BEEN LIFTED, BUT UNFORTUNATELY, THE THREAT OF COVID-19 HAS NOT YET SUBSIDED.

As we adopt to the new normal, here is a reminder of the precautions you must take-

WEAR A MASK

Always wear a mask to prevent droplets from going outside

GET A FLU VACCINATION

Get your flu shot to develop an immune response before flu season begins, particularly if you have comorbidities

WASH YOUR HANDS

Wash your hands often, for about 20 seconds each with soap & carry a sanitizer

MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING

Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arm's lengths) from other people

GET TESTED

Get tested if you have symptoms of COVID-19. Stay at home until you get the result.

COVER YOUR MOUTH & NOSE WHILE SNEEZING, OR COUGHING

Before stepping outside, make sure to carry a handkerchief or a packet of tissues.

FOLLOW PRECAUTIONS BEFORE STEPPING OUT

Carry your sanitizer, water bottle and, most importantly, avoid crowded areas.

CHECK YOUR TEMPERATURE

Monitor your temperature on regular basis

Dilip Kumar wasn't just an actor but an institution, says Senator nephew in Pak

PESHAWAR, JUL 13 (PTI): Legendary Indian thespian Dilip Kumar was not just an actor but an institution and people like him are born once in a century, Pakistan's Senator and the 98-year-old Bollywood icon's nephew Mohsin Aziz said on Monday.

At a condolence meet in the memory of Kumar, the Pakistani lawmaker threw light on his life, career, character and his attachment with Peshawar where he was born.

Kumar, who was born on December 11, 1922 at his ancestral home in QissaKhawani Bazaar area of Peshawar in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, died at a hospital in Mumbai last week after prolonged illness. His original name was Yousuf Khan.

"Actors like Kumar are born once in a century. He was not just an actor, but an institution, Senator Aziz said.

He was a thorough gentleman and down to earth person who won hearts of thousands and millions of people through his hard work, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader said at the meet organised at his house here.

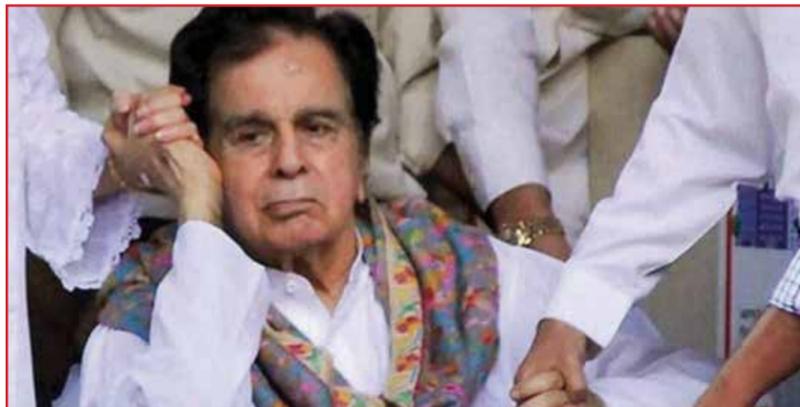
He was a great social worker and contributed generously for humanity, Aziz said.

In 1998, the Pakistan government honoured Kumar with the 'Nishan-e-Imtiaz' - the country's highest

civilian award.

Pakistan's top leadership and people showed their adulation for the legendary actor last week, with President ArifAlvi describing Kumar as "an outstanding actor, a humble man, and a dignified

passing. I can never forget his generosity in giving his time to help raise funds for SKMTH when (the) project launched. This is the most difficult time - to raise (the) first 10% of the funds & his appearance in Pak & London helped raise



personality".

"Sorry to see Dilip Kumar (Yusuf Khan) depart from his worldly abode. An outstanding actor, a humble man, and a dignified personality. Condolences to the immediate family and his huge family of admirers. May his soul rest in peace," he tweeted.

Condoling Kumar's death, Prime Minister Imran Khan said he can never forget his generosity in helping to raise funds for a trust to set up cancer hospitals in his mother's memory.

"Saddened to learn of Dilip Kumar's

huge amounts," Khan tweeted.

"Apart from this, for my generation Dilip Kumar was the greatest and most versatile actor," he said.

Often known as the Nehruvian hero, he did his first film 'JwarBhata' in 1944 and his last 'Qila' in 1998, 54 years later. The five-decade career included 'Mughal-e-Azam', 'Devdas', 'NayaDaur', and 'Ram AurShyam', and later, as he graduated to character roles, 'Shakti' and 'Karma'.

The actor is survived by his wife SairaBanu.

Emmy Awards return with live audience, Cedric the Entertainer to host

LOS ANGELES, JUL 13 (PTI): Actor Cedric Antonio Kyles, better known by his stage name Cedric the Entertainer, will host the 73rd Primetime Emmy Awards as the event returns to a live show this year.

Organised by CBS and the Television Academy, the ceremony will be held on September 19, according to a press release.

This will be the first stint of Cedric the Entertainer, star of hit CBS comedy series "The Neighborhood", as the Master of Ceremonies for the event.

"Since I was a little boy huddled up next to my grandmother, television has always been my reliable friend, so it is an enormous honor for me to host this year's Emmy Awards," said Cedric the Entertainer in a statement.

"Throughout the roller-coaster of a year that we have all lived through, television has helped us stay connected as a society like never before. It not only entertained us, but as it always has, it helped to open our eyes, educate us, and hopefully brought about a better understanding of who we are as a people. I can't wait to take the stage to celebrate all of the great shows and performances that made us laugh, cry, dance and sing over the past year," he added.

In its 2020 edition, Emmy telecast was the first of Hollywood's major awards ceremonies to have a virtual format amid the coronavirus pandemic.

This year's telecast will return to a live, in-person Emmy Awards Ceremony at the Microsoft Theatre with a limited audience of nominees and their guests.

Emmy Award-nominated producers Reginald Hudlin and Ian Stewart will executive produce and Hamish Hamilton will direct the telecast for production companies Done+Dusted and Hudlin Entertainment.

Over the past year, television has united people as a community more than ever, bringing vital information and inspiring entertainment to viewers at a critical time, said Jack Sussman, Executive Vice President, Specials, Music, Live Events and Alternative Programming for CBS.

"Now, who better to bring television audiences together to celebrate the industry's top achievements than our very own King of Comedy, Cedric the Entertainer," added Sussman.

Frank Scherma, Chairman and CEO of the Academy, said Cedric the Entertainer has been "a wonderful friend to the Television Academy and our Foundation".

"... we are thrilled that he will bring his unique comedic perspective to the Emmy ceremony and telecast that marks our return to celebrating nominees and presenters live and in-person," added Scherma.

"We are honored that CBS and the Television Academy have given us the opportunity to produce our fourth Emmys running and, once again, celebrate television's biggest night with a live audience. We are equally excited to 'get the band back together,' for the second time, with the mega-talented Reginald and his crew at Hudlin Entertainment," said Ian Stewart, Executive Producer and President, Done+Dusted.

Hudlin said he is very excited to be returning to the Emmys.

Renowned Oklahoma fiddler Byron Berline dies at 77

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP): Byron Berline, a renowned fiddler who played with superstars like Elton John, the Rolling Stones and owned a popular Oklahoma instrument shop, has died. He was 77.

Bette Berline, Byron's wife, confirmed his death to The Associated Press. She said he was hospitalized after suffering a stroke and that on Saturday his "lungs gave up and so did his heart."

Bette recalled her husband as a fun and loving father and husband, who until soon before his death looked and acted like a man 20 years younger.

"He was more than a musician, an incredibly gifted musician," she said. "He was a good, good man."

A three-time National Fiddle Champion, Berline grew up in Grant County along the Oklahoma-Kansas state line and worked with music greats like John, Vince Gill and Bob Dylan. The Stones recruited Berline for "Country Honk," a country version of "Honky Tonk Women," based on Gram Parsons' recommendation.

Berline moved to Guthrie in 1995 and opened the Double Stop Fiddle Shop & Music Hall, which was destroyed by a fire in 2019. He later opened a new shop across the street.

Berline was also survived by his daughter and four grandchildren, Bette Berline said.

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CHARLOTTE CHUCKLES! Actress Kristin Davis was spotted laughing while filming the Sex and the City revival, And Just Like That, in New York City.

Documentary 'Stateless' premieres in US

WASHINGTON, JULY 13 (PTI): The documentary 'Stateless' depicting the story of minorities who fled to India due to religious persecution in Pakistan had a virtual premiere in the US.

An initiative of IndicDialogue, the documentary is directed by Manavendra Singh Shekhawat and produced by Nikhil Singh Rajput.

The virtual premiere was attended by prominent personalities from 35 cities across the US, Europe, India and Singapore, according to a media release.

In his remarks on the occasion, renowned actor AnupamKher, whose own community was forcefully driven out of their homes in Kashmir Valley, shared the pains of these refugees and said, "...to be in a perpetual state of statelessness is the biggest curse that a human being can make some people go through."

"...when you see the faces of these people, they have agony that the camera captures for that fleeting moment when the director must have said start sound, camera, action, and that must have been 1 or 2 minutes. But what about the other 23 hours, 58

minutes? They are living with that reality. They are living with that pain, he said.

Producer Rajput said that the story of these refugees were not covered in the media the way he saw it.

"Nobody really talked to the actual victims. I saw that gap. I was intrigued, and thought



we should hear their story from their mouths. We are just showing you why they left, no refugee group in the world leaves on their own accord. They leave their home country under dire circumstances.... This movie is their story, he said.

Aries:
You've been wearing your bruises like badges of honour, and it's time to let them go. To let it all go. The pain and suffering from a time long gone. The story of failure and rejection. The story that you're not supported by the Universe and those you love. This is the last leg of the war, Aries. So, power through with the inner knowing that the final destination is closer than ever.
Tip: Let go of the story of pain and rejection.

Taurus:
Look beyond the illusion of chaos, Taurus. Things are *not* as complicated as they seem. All you have to do is approach them from a space of openness and tell them how you really feel. Trust that they will meet you halfway and make an honest attempt to resolve the situation. The intention you're putting out there is key.
Tip: Make peace.

Gemini:
You've got your mojo back, Gemini, and you're starting the week with the right attitude. There's so much to accomplish in the coming days. The time to set things into motion is now. What's more, the seeds that you planted a long time ago are beginning to blossom now, reaffirming your faith in the

truth that everything eventually works out.

Tip: It's all coming together for you.

Cancer:

Home is where the heart is for you, Cancer, and you're thoroughly enjoying your time away from the matrix. Think of this as a necessary pause. A time to refuel your reserves. Focusing on activities that make your soul sing is a good idea right now. As you do, let go of that goal-oriented approach and allow yourself to be fully present in each moment.
Tip: Home is where the heart is, beautiful.

Leo:

Sometimes, you have to let go of the idea of who you are in order to become who you are meant to be. Now is such a time in your life, Leo. A time of inner flowering. A time of embracing your power and coming into your own. You're experiencing a major transformation in the way that you communicate with other people too. You're no longer afraid to speak your truth or express yourself in the manner that feels authentic. Trust that your courage and confidence will inspire the same qualities in other people.
Tip: This is a time of inner flowering, beautiful.

Virgo:

WFH isn't always an easy task, especially when

there is so much going on around you. Don't be afraid to speak up, Virgo. Don't be afraid to ask for what you want, even if that means requesting those you love to give you some space. Communicating your truth in a gentle manner will help you make a breakthrough with both your crew and your colleagues.
Tip: Communicate your truth in a gentle manner.

Libra:

So what if you failed the first time, Libra? So what if you made a fool of yourself the second and the third time around too? Tap into your resilient side. Show up for your mission despite what your ego is telling you to do. Remember, there is no rulebook in the world that can help you at this stage. You have to allow life to teach you what you need to know as you go along.
Tip: Throw that rulebook out of the window.

Scorpio:

Make a ritual out of updating your Gratitude Journal every single day, Scorpio. This will help you realise that you have so much working out for you, despite the chaos in your outer landscape. That brings us to the most important question: what do you feel called to give thanks for today? Remember to be as detailed in your descriptions as you possibly can, and know that

there is no shift in your vibration that will not make a significant impact in your life story.

Tip: Tap into the power of gratitude.

Sagittarius:

This is a time of shedding old skin, Sagittarius. A time of breaking past the illusion and meeting the radiant being of light that has been residing within you all along. What a beautiful journey this has been! A journey of stepping into your power. A journey of coming home. What the cards want you to know is that you have spent many, many lifetimes dimming your sparkle for the fear that you will stand out. So embrace this as an opportunity to break the cycle and change the narrative once and for all. PS: You are being supported by the divine forces in doing so.
Tip: This is a time of coming home.

Capricorn:

Abundance is a way of life in the Capricorn HQ, and you know deep within you that there is always more than enough to go around. So, pay attention to how you are being called to serve today. Trust that the seeds of goodness that you plant will find their way back into your Universe. This is also a time of strengthening your relationship with your teammates. Communication is the key, beautiful. Express your truth

in a manner that feels authentic to you and know that those around you will be happy to render their support in the best way they can.

Tip: Strengthen your relationship with your team members.

Aquarius:

There is always more than enough to go around. Read that again, Aquarius, as you actively replace negative thought patterns with positive ones. The more you focus on the abundance that surrounds you, the more you will attract it into your experience. PS: It's time to work with the law of attraction in a conscious manner.
Tip: You possess the power to open the portal of abundance.

Pisces:

There are times when everything seems topsy-turvy despite your best efforts to get a handle on things, but now is "not" such a time in your life. You are emerging from the muddy waters like a beautiful pink lotus and coming into your own like never before. What's more, you've got Lady Luck working in your favour too, helping you bring to fruition the things you have given your heart and soul to. PS: A prayer of gratitude to the divine forces is in order, Pisces.
Tip: Expect the unexpected when you've got Lady Luck working in your favour!